A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE FEMALE PROTAGONISTS IN THE NOVELS OF AMRITA PRITAM, KAMLA MARKANDYA, ANITA DESAI AND SHASHI DESHPANDE

A

RESEARCH PLAN

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Among all the literary forms, novel is the most faithful, convincing and effective vehicle depicting a nation's ethos. Novel is the most potent, pliable and popular means of communicating a creative experience, evoking and touching the profound thoughts in and about human life. The novelist is a person and an artist: and hence what he or she writes can comprehend all that comprises human's life. It is however a novelist's judgment of human life and relationship which embellishes his or her writing with consistency, direction and shape.

Indian writers have made significant contributions to the world literature since Independence; the past years have been a massive flourishing of Indian fiction in the international scenario. Not only the works of Indian writers soaring on the best-seller list, they are also receiving a great deal of critical acclaim. Some of these writers have achieved worldwide fame; some national and other perhaps have to be content with a more constructive culture. Indian writing in English is now recognized as a major contemporary current in English literature and language.

NOVEL IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE AND "DIASPORA"

"The 'novel' as a literary phenomenon is new to India. Epics, lyrics dramas, short stories and fables have their respectable ancestries going back by several countries, but it is only during a period little more than a century that the novel - the long sustained piece of prose fiction has occurred and taken root in India." (Iyengar 314) The first novel written in Bengali was *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (Spoilt Son of a Rich Family), which came out in 1858. The real beginning was with the great Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. He inaugurated the genre of novel to the Indian readers with his first work – *Rajmohan's Wife* (1864), which was in English. It was followed next year by *Durgeshnandini* in Bengali, which was later translated in English in 1980. *Anandamath*, *Devi Choudhrani* and other novels appeared between 1866 and 1886. After Bankim, a number of great novelists who gave their contribution to raise the Indian English novel around the world were Sarat Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Naraynan.

Indian English novel therefore does greater justice to the depiction of Indian life and society. Mr. Naik said that "The Indian English novel erupted in the fiery talks of Henry Deorazio, the spiritual prose of Tagore and the pacific dictums preached by Mahatma Gandhi. Despite all its problems and changes Indian English novel stood the test of time and proved its worth and relevance. The prose fiction in English written by the Indians is undoubtedly the most popular vehicle for the transmission of Indian ideas to the wider speaking world." (Naik 18). Later the diasporoic writers gave a new height to Indian English novel.

The word "Diaspora" is derived from Greek which means 'to scatter through'. "In its classical sense, diaspora was used to define the experience Jews expelled from Palestine and force to dispose to various parts of earth. It is now broadly used to define other groups that have, through forced or voluntary migrations, taken up abode in places other than the original center. The Chinese, Irish, Turkish, south Asian and Greek Diasporas are example of this dispersal." (Patel 1) The Indian Diaspora can also be described exactly in the aforementioned words. We are aware of the fact that India is not a monolithic entity, rather its plurality is reflected in the multitude of ethnicities, language and traditions, and hence, its psychological and historical landscape bears spectacular mosaic look. "Notably, the study of Diaspora literature offers a new paradigm to the study of Indian cultural productions, outside India, and enables us for global approach with a new perspective, that of the unresolved tension of disporas consciousness, the ethno historical significance of the texts, space for the variety of comparative studies of the Indian writings in English, with a larger international outlook, and broader ideology. The cultural traditions of the deposed Indians have to face local indigenous resentment and despise, political and social adversaries, which, inevitably, breeds nostalgic sensibility." (Jha 2-3). Amitav Ghosh notes that the modern Diaspora… is not merely one of the most important demographic dislocations of modern times: it now represents an important force in world culture.

The corpus of Indian diaspora has reached such monumental proportions over the last two decades that it is nearly impossible to recount the names and works of all writers. The most prominent who gave a new height to this literature are: Arundhti Roy, who won the Booker Prize in 1997 for *The God of Small Things* Salman Rushdi who was awarded the Booker of Bookers *Midnight's Children*, Kiran Desai won Man Booker Prize of the year 2006 for *Inheritance of Loss*, Vikram Seth whose novel *Satiable Boy* W.H.Smith Prize. Jhumpa Lahiri is also awarded with Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies*. These all belong to the young age writers of this literature. Kamla markandey, Namita Gokhle, Naintara Sehgal, Anita Desai, and Sashidesh pandey these belong to the early age.

The present research work comes under the topic, **"A Comparative Study of the Female Protagonists in the Novels of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Markandya, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande".** According to Cixous, "a woman can establish herself as a woman by writing". She observes, "woman must write, must write about women and bring women to writing from which they have driven away as violently as from their bodies." (Cixous 14) This study examines the different female characters in the novels of selected novelists on comparative bases. These novelists depict the psyche of Indian women through their protagonists. These writers direct their attention at the literary depiction of the Indian women's problems, be they of psychological, emotional, social or economic nature. To understand these characters it is necessary to study the status of Indian women in society.

THE STATUS OF ANCIENT WOMEN IN INDIA

The Indian society like a number of classical societies is patriarchal. Patriarchal values regulating sexuality, reproduction and social production (meaning total conditions of production) prevailed and were expressed through specific cultural metaphors. The more subtle expression of patriarchy was through symbolism giving message of inferiority of women through legends highlighting the self-sacrificing, self effacing pure image of women and through the ritual practices which day in and day out emphasized the dominant role of woman as a faithful wife. We will briefly refer to some of these values and practices.

Hindu traditions have generally respected womanhood, though occasionally we find derogatory references to women. The history of ancient India may be said to commence from the period during which the *Rig-Veda* was composed. Vedic literature which is the prime source of the all cultural manifestations in India depicts a vivid picture of ancient womanhood. During this period we find that prayers were uttered for the birth of the son, though we do not come across any reference deprecating the birth of a daughter. It is true that towards the close of *Rig-Veda* several restrictions were gradually imposed on the freedom and privileges of the women. But the period of *Atharva Veda* followed by *the Upanisada* period was glorifying one for the womanhood. At this time woman was considered as the presiding deity of the house.

> "Be thou supreme among father-in-law, supreme also among brothers-in-law,
> be thou supreme over sisters-in-law, supreme also over on mother-in-law."
>
> (*Atharva Veda Period* 5)

The above passage indicates the supremacy of woman during the *Upnisada* period. On the other hand *Manu Smriti* written by first Hindu law-giver, Manu, is the most complicated work for the intellectuals from the women point of view. Manu starts with the fundamental principle that "day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males of their families. Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in her youth and his son protects her in her old age; a woman is never fit for independence. (*Status of Ancient and Modern Women in India* 14) By stating his views on marriage and husband wife relationship he says: "Woman should consider her marriage a sacrament, and should discharge her duties befitting her life. The important principal is that wife should ever remain obedient to her husband and faithful to his memory after his death, should not think of any other man. Even though the husband is of the bad character seeking pleasure elsewhere he must be constantly worshiped by the faithful wife. If a wife shows disrespect to her husband who is addicted to some evil passion, who is drunkard, or who is diseased, she shall be deserted for three months and be deprived for her ornaments and furniture." (16)

Manu further states that a vicious husband must be worshipped, but a bad wife may at any time be superseded by another wife. Beside this the husband may leave the wife on other grounds. "A barren wife may be superseded in the eighth year; she who's all children die, in tenth; she who bears only daughters, in the eleventh; but she who is quarrelsome, without delay." (17)The wife has no right to regard herself as independent, for "neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released the husband." (17)

Manu believes in the coordinated and harmonious development of human personality. He fully realizes the woman as a component part of man, the two together making a complete whole. It should be noted that his idea is that of oneness of the two not of equality with each other.

At the middle age when Muslims came in India, the situation of Hindu women became worst. Hindu women under Muslim rule preferred death by *Sati*, especially among the Rajputs who considered it a lesser evil, than capture by the invaders. Child marriages, *Purda Pratha,* prostitution and so on were also the impacts of Muslim period. At the advent of the British rule the position of the Indian women was its lowest ebb. *Bal-Vivah* was still in vogue, feminine literacy was considered as a source of moral danger. Hindu temples openly or surreptitiously harbored *Devdasis.*

BEGINNING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The revolutionary changes brought about by the British during its rule in India with the Indian social reformers deserve mention. The first was the abolition of *Sati* by law. Raja Ram Mohan Roy who advocated against the *Sati* and *Purdha Pratha*, and on 4th December 1829, the British passed the firm resolution by which *Sati* was made a crime of culpable homicide punishable with fine, imprisonment or both. Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj supported widow re-marriage. Missionaries may be said to the torch-bearer of modern education of India. "Celebrated among those who had dedicated for the cause of women education were Francian Sorabji, Ramabai Ranade, and Pundita Ramabai. It was in 1917 that the first women's university was founded in Pune. In 1932, Lady Irwin College was founded in Delhi. The Madras University was instituted for post- graduate courses in cookery, house-keeping; hygiene and sanitation, and many other universities followed the example of Madras."(Pandit 24)

Women who had distinguished themselves in various fields were lady Venkta Subba Rao, founder of the Madras Seva Sadan; Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi who was the first woman legislator in British India. She took active part for the enforcement of child marriage act, for the suppression of women and children in Madras and for the abolition of *Devadasi* system in the Hindu temples.Radha Bai Subbaroyan was a great educationist, and a social reformer. As a

legislator she moved bills for the prohibition, on polygamy, marriage reform and rising of age of marriage and of consent and codification of Hindu law to suit contemporary requirement.

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

We have briefly overviewed the status of the Indian women from ancient time to modern time that how women have started their journey from *Vedic* period and reached to *Upanishda* period, what kind of miseries they faced during the middle-age and in dependent India and how English missionaries and the social reformers raised their status in society. Many efforts have been done by the government, socialists and the women welfare NGO's since the independence of India for women empowerment. But the question is still that **Is the Indian woman free from the suppression? Does she have equal rights as her male counterpart?** "Upper and middle class educated women, particularly in large urban agglomeration, who are working and moving freely generate an impression that Indian women's status has substantially improved. Moreover there is evidence of capable clout, which reinforces this impression." (Pandit 60)

But in small towns or rural areas or in city slums, women still suffer social and economic oppression. In town and villages, women are confined to home bound activities and involved in responsibilities and interest limited only to their kith and kin. Many socialists think that it is 'Ideology', which works behind the suppression of women in the society. In fact the suppression starts within 'the family' itself. "Feminists have paid considerable and quite right attention, to some intimate and oppressive processes whereby, the little girls are enjoined to be helpful, dependent and caring and little boys to be active, independent and protective. The intense emotional and psychological forces deployed in family clearly play an important role in bringing pressure to bear on children to internalize appropriate gender identities and in structuring our consciousness of gender. Ideologies of domesticity and maternity for women, of breadwinning and responsibility for men, are activated very strongly in families themselves in contemporary society and it is unsurprising that feminists should have pointed to 'the family' as a prime agent of gender socialization and women's oppression." (Chopra 26) Along with the ideology or societal norm of patriarchy, the economical structure is also a key point of women suppression. The women are economically dependent on the male as he is considered the breadwinner.

Though the Indian Constitution provides equal rights to every citizen, and makes sure that every individual is free to exercise these rights equally. "The Preamble to the Constitution of India resolved to secure all its citizens justice - social, economic and political; liberty to thought, expression, belief, faith and worship: equality of status and opportunity; to promote among them fraternity assuring the dignity of individual and the unity of the Nation." (Pandit 61) Article 14

clearly stats about these 'Fundamental Rights' and Article 15 prohibits any discrimination. Indian women are beneficiaries to the rights in the same manners as Indian men.

But patriarchal values and normative structure established some two thousand year ago still persist through in a different grab. Motherhood and the ideal of faithful loyal and, self-sacrificing wives are projected through these social norms. The reality of the subordinate position of woman is indicated through adverse sex ratio of girls, the growing domestic violence, increasing number of dowry deaths and rape cases.

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS AND ORIGEN OF FEMINISM

Breaking tradition, defying custom, and overcoming discrimination require courage and leadership. In India Gandhiji has done much for women for their rightful place in domestic and public life. Mahatma Gandhi believed that "Swaraj would be meaningless without reform of the social structure and up- liftment of the weaker sections, namely the women and the lower social strata to a position of equality with others." (Mahatma Gandhi 40)

But the original contributors to women's human rights were those who first taught women to read and thus to explore the world outside the home and immediate community. "Historical research, however, has revealed a much longer period, began at least in the early fifteenth century in 1405, with the publication of *Le liver de la cité des dames* (*The Book of the Ladies*) by Christine de Pizan. This work stimulated what French feminists call the *querelle des femmes* (debate about women), which continues to the present". (Fraser 16). But the real beginning of the idea of women's human rights is recorded with Mary Wolstoncraft's book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, published in response to the promulgation of the natural-right-of-man theory. She demanded equal opportunities for women in the field of education, economics and politics. Later the strong male supporter of women liberation, John Sturt Mill, showed serious concern about Women's oppression in his work *The Subjugation of Women* (1869). He felt the need for improved education for women and condemned women oppression as domestic slavery.

As these writers were raising their voice for w the liberation of female sex they were called feminists. The term 'feminism' is worldwide. It is a global and revolutionary ideology. It is a socio- cultural movement that aims at the freedom of women from male domination in the patriarchal society. It is also equivalent to Humanism. It highlights various hidden and oppressive aspects of man – woman relationship. This movement is fought for the issues related to women like gender discrimination, male domination, oppressive culture, domestic violence, sexual harassment, reproductive rights, property rights, equal salary, equal opportunities for

career and business, liberation and empowerment of women. It has swept the world and has brought a tremendous change in the status of women across the world. "Feminist critics try to go against the patriarchal ideology. It is wide in range, because it accommodates several issues-cultural, social, political and psychological." (Nagrajn 212) Feminist approach is prominent in modern and post modern literature. Women's liberation movement is a serious reform movement aiming at an upliftment of women in society. "Feminist theory, which emerged from the feminist movements, aims to understand the nature of gender inequality by examining women's social roles and lived experience." (Agrawal 1)

FEMINISTIC APPROACH IN WORKS OF PRESENTED FEMALE NOVELISTS

Women writers of all ages have a natural preference for writing about women and their struggle with patriarchal society to create a particular and individual space for themselves. And those who advocate about the rights of women are generally called feminists. The goal of feminism is to establish and defend equal political, economic and social rights and equal opportunities for women. It has been minutely handled in the works of Amrita Pritam, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, and Shashi Deshpande. These Indian women novelists have portrayed women's issues both psychologically and physically in their novels. These writers studied deep into psyche of their characters and projected various images of Indian women and their status in society. They have written about women in a varied cultural perspective. In fiction, some women characters have attitude of rejection and negation of life while others have an affirmation and acceptance of life with a compromising attitude leading to deep sense of fulfillment. In this sense, the Indian women writers create a pattern of new study because they have dared to shatter the myth of a male dominated social system. Amrita Pritam raised her voice against woman abduction and she criticizes the hypocritical society of the contemporary time. No other writer equals her in her mastery of depicting the principle character against various situational backgrounds. And the works of Kamala Markandaya also have the serious concern with feminine sensibility. She is concerned with the plight, status and attitude of woman in India under the stress of changing social, economical, modern, spiritual and political forces. Her works have drawn great critical attention and acclaim for her sensitive and realistic representation of the India middle-class women. Anita Desai is concerned with the challenges of contemporary reality. Her sincere concern for women and their oppressive lot is reflected strongly in all her novels and stories. She depicts the dilemma of the individuals stemming from the contemporary chaos created by crumbling of values in the society. On the other hand Shashi Deshpande does not like to call herself as a feminist but she has certainly some feminist elements in her novels. In all her novels

there is a striving on the part of the protagonists towards arriving at a more authentic way of life than the one which is available to them. She tries to awake the consciousness of Indian woman against the traditional oriented society and communicates the real existence of woman. She portrays a large repertoire of women in a changing Indian society, their struggles in the face of extreme exploitation, and their consequent success in asserting themselves within the framework provided.

A feminist novel for India is not a novel, which a woman writes just because she is a woman. It is written by one who has understood a woman both as a woman and as a person pressurized by all kind of visible and invisible, external and internal forces of patriarchal structure. An attempt will be made to study the various aspects of feminism which were taken by the proposed writers in their novels and to see how far they have succeeded in securing for the members of their sex, their present status in the family and in society.

AMRITA PRITAM: BRIEF BIO-SKETCH

Amrita Pritam, born on 31stAugust 1919, was the first women prominent poet, essayist and novelist of Punjabi literature, migrated to India from Lahore after India and Pakistan partition in the year 1947. She was the only child of a poet and school teacher, Kartar Singh Hitkari. Her mother died when she was very young. After that they moved to Lahore and they stayed there until partition. She started writing at a very early age. When she was 16 years old, her first collection of poems titled *'Amrit Lehran'* was published. The work of this popular Indian poet and writer is equally loved by the people of both India and Pakistan. She started writing as a romantic poet but soon changed her gears and actively participated in the Progressive Writers' Movement.

Amrita Pritam began her career as a romantic poet. She is widely remembered for her emotional *poem 'Aj Aakhaan Waris Shah Nu' (Today I invoke Waris Shah).* It was an elegy to the 18th century Punjabi poet and expression of her agony over the violent massacres that took place during the partition of India. One of the most noted works of Amrita Pritam was *'Pinjar' (The Skeleton)* 1950, in which she has created her memorable character, Puro, and an epitome of violence against women. This novel portrays the violence against women and loss of humanity. The novel was made an award winning film, Pinjar, in 2003.

Feminism and humanism are the main themes used by Amrita Pritam in her write-ups. Through her work she always tried to portray the realism of society. She presented her views with extreme clarity and boldness. Feminism and various aspects of feministic ideas got reflected through her novels. In Punjabi literature, she is popularly known as the most significant voice of the women.

Work of Amrita Pritam also included poetic quality. Like for instance there are moments of ecstasy, great joy fraught with great-sadness; there are moments of lonely soliloquies and almost spiritual despair and despondency in her works. Amrita Pritam had a flourishing career for more than six decades. In her career, she penned down 28 novels, five short stories volumes, 18 compilations of prose and 16 prose volumes. The most popular short stories written by Amrita Pritam are *"Kahaniyan jo Kahaniyan Nahi", "Stench of Kerosene*" and *"Kahaniyon ke Angan mein".*

Amrita Pritam, throughout her career, rewarded with several prestigious awards. She is the first woman in Punjabi literature who was awarded with esteemed Sahitya Akademi Award for her composition *'Sunehe'* (*Message*). In the year 1982, she also received the Bharatiya Gynanpith Award, which is one of the highest literary awards of India, for *'Kagaz Te Canvas'* (*The Paper and the Canvas*). Then again, in the year 1969, she was awarded the Padma Shri Award and after that in the year 2004, she received the second highest civilian award of India that is the Padam Vibhushan Award. She also received the "Sahitya Akademi Fellowship" for lifetime achievement by the Sahitya Akademi (India's Academy of Letters).

PINJAR (THE SKELETON)

The novel *Pinjar (The Skeleton)* is most influential and dark narrative of the cross religious abduction of women that took place in partition during 1947 in Punjab. It is also known as a 'Partition Novel'. *Pinjar* tells the story of Puro, a young Hindu woman who is betrothed to a young man, Ramchand. A Muslim, Rashid kidnaps her as his family has an ancestral dispute with Puro's family. One night, Puro manages to escape back to her parents, but her parents turn her away, explaining that if she stays, Rashid's Muslim clan would arrive and slaughter everyone. Left with no support, Puro returns to Rashid. Meanwhile, the British colonialists leave India under the effects of partition. Ramchand, his uncle, mother, cousin and sister, Lajo, leave for India after they found Ramchand's father missing in the Hindu-Muslim riots after partition.

Shortly after, Lajo is kidnapped by thugs, Puro meets Ramchand and who tells her about Lajo. Puro finds Lajo and helps her escape with Rashid's help. They leave with Lajo for Lahore where Puro's brother, Trilok and Ramchand come to receive her. Trilok explains to her that she can start a new life with Ramchand as he is still ready to accept her. Puro refuses to go back to her home, saying that she is where she belongs. Puro seeks Rashid out and tearfully bids Ramchand, Trilok, and Lajo farewell forever.

The novel also deals with the psychological development of the protagonist, Puro. The way in which Amrita deals with the psychology is far beyond from other writers. We can measure her

art of the psychological treatment of the character with the opening lines of the novel (translated from a Hindi novel): the sky was colorless grey. Puro sat on her haunches with a sack spared beneath her feat. She was shelling peas. She pressed open a pushed out the row of peas with her finger. A slimy little slug stuck to her thumb. She felt as if she stepped in a cesspool. She ground her teeth, flicked off the slug and rubbed her hand between her knees. Puro stared at the three heaps in front of her: the empty husks, the pods and the peas she had shelled. She felt as if her body was a pea-pod inside which she carried a slimy white caterpillar (as she was pregnant). So this is Pritam's art of imagination and psychological treatment of her character. She can bind to a pregnant mother to think her own unborn child as a caterpillar.

Through the novel Amrita raised the feminine voice against the women suppression in the contemporary society. She shows the male brutality through the character of Pagli (mad) who is pregnant. That shows the bad and the lusty mind of men who do not even leave a mad girl who do not understand anything. Novel depicts the horrible picture of female gender during the partition. Women bear all the brutality of the men and remained silent.

KAMLA MARKANDYA: BRIEF BIO-SKETCH

Kamala Markandaya, born in 1924 was a pioneer member of the Indian Diaspora, occupies an outstanding place among the Indian women novelists writing in English. She belongs to the body of writers who, by choice or otherwise, have left their countries of origin and made their homes elsewhere. Since the 1950's she has been living in Britain and written novels about India or about Indian in England. Her real name was Kamla Purniya and 'Markandaya' was a pseudonym which she used as a writer. She married Bertrand Taylor an Englishman and had one daughter. Markandaya was from an affluent aristocratic family but her grandparents came from rather orthodox Tamil Brahmin family of Mysore, South India. After a short period of early education in Mysore at the age of sixteen, she joined The Madras University in 1940 where she studied History but left it without completing graduation for the sake of writing and journalism in which she was much interested. She graduated much later in her career. From 1940 to 1947, she worked as a journalist and also wrote short stories in Indian newspapers. In 1948, she migrated to England. She got success with *Nectar in a Sieve*, (1954) although she had written two novels before it. Her next famous novel was *A Handful of Rice*. She supported the woman cause and their struggle in her own way by highlighting the hardships faced by them in family life. She took her last breath on Sunday May 18, 2004 at her home the outskirts of London leaving her daughter Kim Oliver behind her. Her major works are: *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966), *The Nowhere Man* (1972), *Two Virgins* (1973), *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977), and *Pleasure City* (1983).

NECTAR IN A SIEVE

Nectar in a Sieve is the sad story of a large poverty-stricken Hindu family in a remote rural village in southern India. Despite valiant efforts, the family failed to extricate itself from abject poverty caused by hardships of nature and economics. This poverty forced the only daughter into prostitution and caused three sons to leave the village to seek employment. With very little to eat, it was a miracle the family remained alive. In spite of their hardships, the family exhibited love, contentment, and hope that their situation would improve, but this hope never became a reality. Rukmani (Ruku) married Nathan and bore a daughter, Ira, and six sons, four of them in quick succession following a long period of infertility after Ira's birth. As the family grew in size, their resources diminished and their problems increased. Ira eventually returned to live with her parents after her childless marriage ended. She subsequently had an illegitimate son, Sacrabani. The two eldest sons of Rukmani and Nathan migrated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) after losing their jobs at the tannery for instigating a strike; the third son went to the city to take up employment; the fourth was killed when he was found searching for food in the vicinity of the tannery; the fifth became apprenticed to a white doctor; the last died as a child. With very little substance to begin with, the family became dependent on a small tract of land they rented from a heartless, absentee landlord. The sons did not want to remain on the land as Nathan had. Although Nathan and Rukmani expected them to stay, they saw no hope of improving their situation. The family's home was a mud walled structure with thatched roof and earthen floor. They planted rice and vegetables, crops were destroyed by drought and monsoon, they were forced to sell most of their possessions and live extremely frugally. For brief periods, they enjoyed some degree of prosperity. When the family was small, the crop good, and the boys worked in the tannery the family ate well, had crops to sell, and to store some of their rice. Kenny, the white doctor, whose ambition was to build a hospital with the foreign aid he collected, became a close family friend and helped them with money, food, and medicine. Rice cultivation, being very labor-intensive, took a toll on Nathan's health, especially since sons disappointedly but understandably did not help much. The construction of the tannery in the village provided employment for some but increased the price of consumer goods and succeeded in squeezing many of the peasants off the land. When Nathan's land was sold to the tannery, he and Rukmani went to the city in search of their third son with whom they had never corresponded. There they found an equally cruel environment. Their few belongings and money were stolen as they sought refuge in the temple, and they were forced to survive mainly on handouts of food given as offerings to the gods and goddesses. In addition, they failed to find their son who had left his wife and male child. Nathan and Ruku yearned for the land from which they had been evicted. When they finally saved enough money to return to their village from the

backbreaking work they acquired at a stone quarry with the help of Puli, a destitute but cunning street boy, Nathan died. Ruku, however, returned to the village with Puli, who she introduced as her adopted son and for whom she expected medical attention from Kenny to rid him of the disease which had eaten away his fingers. Apparently, the cycle of poverty would continue for the family who now had no land and relied on Kenny and their apprenticed son Selvam for support.

Kamala Markandaya started writing novels, when India was just at the threshold of newly won freedom. Poverty, hunger and starvation, women injustices were everywhere. And the credit goes to Kamala Markandaya that she uses fiction as a vehicle for communicating her feminine vision of life. Markandaya's women are in search of something positive. She has portrayed a gloomy scenario of Indian life due to changes in social, economic and political spheres yet she believes that togetherness and mutual understanding can create a meaningful existence for mankind. In each of her novels she has portrayed strong women characters who are prepared to meet the challenges of life come what may. The novels of Kamala Markandaya reflect the awakened feminine sensibility in contemporary India. In her novels, she traces a woman's journey from self-sacrifice to self-realization, from self denial to self-assertion and from self-negation to self-affirmation. Markandaya proves that the plight of the woman in rural India has a meaningful role in the changing scenario of Indian society.

The chief protagonists in most of her novels are female characters who are in constant search for meaning and value of life. The feminist voice is heard in all her novels. In her first epoch-making novel, *Nectar in a sieve* (1954) the narrator-heroine, Rukmani emerges a greater and stronger character than her husband. The author displays Rukmani's life which is full of hopes and frustrations, pleasures and pains, triumph and defeat, rise and fall. In fact, before writing this novel Kamala Markandaya went to live in a village to seek an opportunity of getting the first hand experience of village life and the problems of rural folk and therefore this novel is mainly a product of her personal experience in rural living.

ANITA DESAI: BRIEF BIO-SKETCH

Anita Desai, one of the prominent Indian English women novelists, was born on June 24, 1937 in Mussoori, a hill station situated in the foothills of the Himalayan ranges, near Dehradun, in the North Indian State of Uttaranchal, India. She was famously known as Anita Mazumdar, a daughter of Bengali business executive named Dhiren N.Mazumdar and a German mother named Toni Nime. She grew up speaking German at home and Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English at school. She did Bachelor in English, from Delhi University. Since 1950s, she has lived in

various cities like Calcutta, Bombay (Mumbai), Chandigarh, New Delhi and Pune later she migrated to America. Some of These Indian cities are well described in her novels. She is one of the best modern Indian English novelists. She is a writer who has influenced generations of writers. She has enriched Indian fictional world with her significant literary outputs. She married on December 13, 1958, to Ashwin Desai a Gujarati gentleman who was a businessman. They have four children including Booker Prize winning novelist, Kiran Desai. Her first book, *Cry, the Peacock,* was published in England in 1963. She has been recognized as such both in India and abroad. She has also written by and large about women characters through her fiction. Throughout her novels and short stories, Desai focuses on the personal struggles of anglicized, middle class women in contemporary India.

The most prominent feature of Desai's art is her delineation of characters. R.K.Srinivas Iyenger writes: "Since her preoccupation is with the inner world of sensibility rather than the outer world of action, she has tried to forge a style supple and suggestive enough to convey the fever and fretfulness of the stream-of-consciousness of her principal characters. The intolerable grapple, with thoughts, feelings and emotions is necessarily reflected in the language, syntax and imagery..." (Iyenger 464) Her major works are: *Cry, the Peacock* (1963), *Voices in the City* (1965), *Bye-Bye Blackbird* (1971), *Where Shall We Go This Summer?* (1975), *Fire on the Mountain* (1977), *Clear Light of Day* (1980), *In Custody* (1984), *Baumgartner's Bombay* (1988), *Fasting, Feasting* (1999), *The Zigzag Way* (2004).

CRY, THE PEACOCK

Cry, the Peacock, the first novel of Anita Desai, is a powerful psychological analysis of Maya, the main protagonist of the story. She is seen as a neurotic, introvert and love-famished character, a victim of the inadequacy of human relationships. Maya's claustrophobia, loneliness and frustration are effectively brought out by the writer. The whole novel is the story of Maya's struggle to overcome the societal limitations imposed by a tradition bound patriarchal culture. Maya, an introvert and a pampered daughter of a wealthy aristocratic father, is given in marriage to Gautama, a man much older than herself. The novel opens with the death of Maya's pet dog, Toto. In her state of agony and depression, she is reminded of the albino astrologer's prediction that in the fourth year of her marriage, there will be a death, either her or her husband's. To make her free from the burden, Maya recedes to her past and fantasizes her childhood days. Fantasy becomes a part of the total structure of the novel and it is constantly projected along with and in contrast to the world of reality. Maya always clings to fantasy, as she is unable to relate herself to reality. Her relationship to reality passes through three different stages—her childhood, marital life and the final stage when she totally surrenders herself to the world of insanity.

"Anita Desai is one of those novelists who have captured the vitality and changing roles of those contemporary Indian women. She excels in the writing psychological novels. She has depicted through her characters feminine personality and feminine psyche better than most other Indo-Anglian novelist."(Patel 164)

Cry, the Peacock is about Maya's cry for love and understanding in her loveless marriage with Gautama. "The unforgettable dance image of peacocks, figured in chapter three and later on referred to in chapter six, part II, of this novel reflects the title of the novel, as they dance and sing: pia, pia, they cry, Lover, Lover, Mio, Mio, I die, I die..."(Dewani 227) The cry of the peacock runs parallel to the main thread of the story. The cry which auspiciously suggests the ecstasy of life has the finality of death.

Richa Dewani says that "Anita Desai is the vanguard of new generation of Indian writers who are experimenting with themes of inner consciousness... she gives her readers valuable into feminine consciousness through her memorable protagonist."(Dewani 228) Anita Desai's novels move around women characters although she is preoccupied with the theme of incompatible marital couplets. Cry, the Peacock is a brilliant study of the abnormal psychology of its neurotic protagonist Maya. Her moods, observation, dilemmas and abnormality are conveyed effectively by Desai.

SHASHI DESHPANDE: BRIEF BIO-SKETCH

Shashi Deshpande was born in 1938 in Dharwad, India. She is the second daughter of the renowned dramatist and Sanskrit scholar, Shriranga. At the age of fifteen, she went to Mumbai where she graduated in Economics. Shashi Deshpande now lives in Bangalore with her pathologist husband and two sons. The early years of her marriage were largely given over to the care of her two young sons, but later she took a course in journalism and for a time worked on a magazine and also completed her M.A. in English Literature. She then moved to Bangalore, where she gained a degree in Law.

Deshpande's writing career began in 1970, and she began her writing with short stories which later developed into writing novels. Her first collection of short stories *The Legacy,* published in 1972 had been prescribed for graduate students in Columbia University. She is regarded as one of the most accomplished contemporary Indian women writers in English. Her output is by no means inconsiderable — Eight novels viz., *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980); *If I Die Today*; *Come Up and Be Dead* (1983); *Roots and Shadows* (1986); *That Long Silence* (1987); *The Binding Vine* (1993); *A Matter of Time* (1996) and *Small Remedies* (2000). Shashi Deshpande has written four volumes of short stories, viz., *The Legacy* (1978); *The Miracle* (1986); *It was*

Dark (1986), and *It was the Nightingale* (1986), and books for children too. She was awarded the Sahitya Akadmi Award for the novel *That Long Silence* in 1990 and the Padma Shri Award in 2009.

ROOTS AND SHADOWS

The woman protagonist in *Roots and Shadows* 23 is the new woman Indu. Indu, an educated young woman, is highly sensitive. She starts aspiring to become independent and complete in herself. She brushes aside all the age-old beliefs and superstitions prevalent in the society. As a motherless child, she was tended by the members of the joint family who never denied her any amount of care and affection. Old Uncle, Kaka, Atya and other family members always cushioned her position in the family. But now she finds the dominant Akka, a senior member and a mother surrogate in the novel, and even the family to be a hindrance in achieving her goal of attaining independence and completeness. Indu develops an aversion to the natural biological functions of the female as mother and has apathy towards bearing a child. She develops a vague sense of guilt and feels that her womanhood closes so many doors for her. Defying the traditional role she is expected to play, Indu seeks fulfillment in education and a career. She works as a journalist for a woman's magazine but gives it up out of disgust for writing only about women and their problems and starts working for another magazine. Indu recollects that she has surrendered herself to her husband Jayant step by step, not mainly for love but to avoid conflict. She resorts to deception by putting up a facade of a happy married life which, as she feels, has taken its toll on her personality.

Shashi Deshpande is known for creating women characters that are contemporary. "Shashi Despande projects the traditional image of woman. But as the time changed, the portrayal became realistic with a thrust on her sense of frustration and alienation. The character created by her, like their creator, was torn apart by the conflicting forces of tradition and modernity." (Naik 80) Deshpande's women protagonists are victims of the prevalent gross gender discrimination, first as daughters and later as wives. They are conscious of the great social inequality and injustice towards them, and struggle against the oppressive and unequal nature of the social norms and rules that limit their capability and existence as a wife. Fettered to their roles in the family, they question the subordinate status ordained to them by society.

"Indu, the protagonist in Roots and Shadows, emerges successfully as a woman of determination and does not yield to the dictates of the patriarchal society. She respects her 'roots' that lie within the family, though trying to get out of its damaging, life denying 'shadows'."(Bhakt 48) She exemplifies a woman in the transitional period that is torn between age old traditions and

individual views. It records how she defies the worn-out traditions, pushes aside all her fears about her imagined inadequacies and asserts herself as an individual.

So this is all about the presented writers, their works and their heroines. All the characters of each and every writer are totally different from each other on many grounds as socio-cultural, psychological bases, and age difference. On the other hand there are some similarities in their characters like they all are married, have their own families and affairs related to their kith and kin. Therefore a comparative study of these protagonists will unfold the hidden layers of their personality.

COMPARISON OF SELECTED FEMALE PROTAGONISTS

The novel *Pinjar* underlines a large number of issues in a non biased way, using the partition theme in its entirety. It depicts the turmoil resulting from the partition, where millions of families were displaced and innumerable women were kidnapped and raped. Puro, the protagonist, depicts the trauma of women who were abducted during the partition with utmost pain, grief and sufferings. Her character represents an ill-fated partition-era female. She plays the complete woman, being daughter, sister, wife and mother. However she never accepts her marriage or her life. She is a skeleton, a 'Pinjar', existing but not living.

During the time of partition women were treated as a commodity, as a symbol of victory and the sign of men power which they exercised by kidnapping and raping them. All feuds and disputes, it seems, are created and propagated by men. It is here that women become a tool of honor and dishonor and the principle target of all patriarchal games. One such victim is the kidnapped Puro. She asks Rashid how she could possibly be held responsible for a crime her grand-uncle committed. Amidst the partition chaos, Lajo was prey to similar tragedy, as were hundreds of other girls.

Particularly appalling is the scene where Puro is rejected by her family when she returns. The intolerant thinking of the society is all too apparent as the girl is asked to return to her kidnapper. Nothing is above family honor and image. The decisions fate makes are accepted without question. In a certain dialogue, Puro, after hearing the story of a gang raped girl, goes as far as saying that to be born a woman is nothing less than a curse. The society is blindly cruel to those with whom fate is unfair.

At the end of the novel Puro was offered to go back to her family which she dramatically rejects. As to why she did so, that has been left a semi mystery for the reader. We assume that Puro renders essentially feminine behavior, eventually learning to love her husband. She could

not muster the courage to be disloyal to a man who had been a good husband for so long. Puro found solace in rescuing Lajo and is probably incapable of further upheavals in life. She has a husband, a home and is content. She knows where she belongs and her life at this point is beyond repair. Amrita Pritam holds all the agony and the grief of the women who suffered during the 1947 through the character of Puro. In her worse conditions of life she does not lose positivity. Though pessimism tries to overpower her but every time she collects all her strength and stand strongly. The protagonist, Puro is the mouth-piece of the novelist. Amrita criticized the patriarchal society's norms which refused to take back its kidnapped daughter because she has spent a night in other man's house. Amrita raised her voice against evils of the society and penned down the women psychology under the impact of these evils.

Kamala Markandya presents various slices of life in terms of social political, cultural and economical aspects, and places her women protagonists against these various situational backgrounds and explores to expose the strength and stamina of their spirit and morality.

William Walsh, a critic, terms her as "the most distinguished women writer of post-independent era." (Walsh 66) She is different from other women writers in the sense that she depicts her ideas openly through her characters. None can equal her in the portrayal of Indian rural life particularly its disintegration under the impact of industrialization. She studies the principal character from social, political, cultural and economical backgrounds. Rukmani, the female protagonist, in her novel *Nectar in a Sieve* is known for her human dignity with her effacing stoicism conscience of the problems. She faces the problems boldly and depicts a positive attitude with good ray of hope yet to come in future. She demonstrates the importance of faith in life as a great sustaining power. Rukku is presented as a typical Indian wife. She is a sensible and prudent housewife, and managed her home well. Though Nathan is not like her dream husband but she never realizes him this thing. She got married at the very age of twelve since then she has been the loyal wife towards her husband. She was a true helpmate to her husband. At the very beginning of the novel Rukmani present as a weak character, she surrenders herself so unquestioningly and wholly one feels that she cannot possibly survive. When the crisis comes, the strength of her attitude proved, and we realize that if she had not bent like the grass she would surely have broken.

On the other hand, Anita Desai views women's problems from psychological perspective. She studies the Indian women's problems from psychological point of view which is rarely reflected in other writers' novels. The solutions presented by her may be muted or oblique at times but the significance of her efforts can hardly be denied.

Maya adopts the strategy of escape into the past as the present becomes frustrating, dissatisfying and unendurable. It shows her inability to grow out of the childhood world to merge

with the larger world outside. In her attempt to recreate the childhood world of fantasy that caters to her demands of love and recognition she forgets the boundaries between realities and make believe. Gradually losing touch with all reality she withdraws to her own cocooned self. Her fantasies are confused with vague memories and fears. Ungratified physical urges force her to involve in erotic fantasies. Confronted with Toto's death, Maya momentarily seeks solace in the gentle lullaby of her childhood. But retreat to the past brings in the memory of the unpleasant prophecy. Dreams and nightmares dominated by the albino image haunt her. Thus Maya's retreat into the world of fantasy does not liberate her from the nagging sense of insecurity and schizophrenia, but culminates in insanity and murder. The distinguishing qualities of Introspection, introversion and a refusal to surrender their individual selves inevitably result in isolation and alienation though the extent of them varies qualitatively and quantitatively in temporal, spatial and individual terms. The novel emphasizes the motives and circumstances, the why and wherefore of the external action rather than the action itself.

"Interpersonal awareness, separation anxiety and fragile inner self on interpersonal sensitivity correlated with psychological distress. Human behaviour changes according to their experiences with various people. If he or she has a positive experience with persons, the attitude towards them is likely to be positive and conversely negative experiences tend to make them cautious. Experiences and events become reference points in one's lives; he or she draws conclusions which serve as guidelines for their future." (Bhutani, Sudhir, Philip 248) As in the case of Maya it is her attitude towards the life which makes her depressed. While inability endure the stress drive Maya to murder to establish her identity through self-discovery and compromise.

But Sashi Deshpande's heroine, Indu, not mere a housewife, but she is a career woman also. The journey to self-awareness is not an easy task for the protagonist of Deshpande. It demands a surrender of the inflated ego and an intensely painful self-examination. After ten years of immigration enables Indu to critically analyze her matrimony which separated her from, yet reminded her everyday of her home. She realizes to her dismay that her hard won independence seems only an ephemera. Under the guise of independence the rebel in her had conditioned herself to be as submissive as any other Indian woman. She who has been molding herself on Jayant's pattern gleans courage to stand by herself. The self-introspection enables Indu to confront the hideous ghost of her own cowardice. The realization that there is nothing to be ashamed of her sexual need liberates her from a sense of guilt. The understanding that marriage has hampered her individuality because she had regarded it as a trap and not a nurturing bond turns a new leaf in her life. Her choice of security through reconciliation does not in any way tarnish her image. The ethos in the novel is neither victory nor of defeat but of harmony and understanding between two opposing ideas and conflicting themselves. The prodigal daughter on her return inherits not only of the wealth of Akka, but her indomitable spirit too. After serious

introspection Indu establishes her individuality by refusing to cater to the demands of others. Her reconciliation with the dead Akka enables her to look at rules as essential elements that add to the grace and dignity of life. Within the matrix of the Indian familial situation Indu is able to make space for herself by accommodating others too. Brooding over tradition, marriage, love, sex and her own life she leaves home not as a fragmented personality but as a whole self. The realization that freedom lies in having the courage to do what one believes as the right thing to do and the determination and tenacity to adhere to it guarantees her the clear light of life.

All the women writers that are mentioned display keen observation and fine sensibility of intuitive insight into life, and put forth their strong points in writing their novels. Though hailing from the upper middle class, affluent and urban educated families, these writers are deeply and sensitively alive to women's predicament in a patriarchal society.

HYPOTHESIS

The position of the Indian woman in general and Indian woman as wife in particular, has been paradoxical. In spite of being a prominent figure in the family, she has lived the life of subjugation, suffering and suppression. However, now she has started becoming conscious of her rights and responsibilities, distress and destination. Accordingly she has waged her war, too. Of course, this war is not going to be easy and short-lived, as it is against human elements like ego, greed, ambition, selfishness, sadism, etc. The present period that she is passing through is a transitional one. And she has miles to go before the goal is reached.

As the proposed study is the comparative one and related to the feminine sensibility; for this purpose a brief study of Indian women in the society and the comparison of female protagonists has already been done. After examining the differences and similarities, an attempt is made to study the ways and means adopted by these selected female protagonist to solve the problems of their lives and to achieve their individual identity. This study also tries to bring out the message which the writers try to convey through their characters.

This study presents hypnotized views of Amrita Pritam, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande's portrayal of women protagonists in terms of the shifting sensibilities and changing attitudes of Indian women. It also tries to analyze the portrayal of women characters who belong to rural and urban upper classes of Indian society. Amrita starts the issue of the women suppression in the patriarchal society. Her novel is not the lamentation of the protagonist but the women in general. As an artist Kamala Markandaya's fiction is concerned with change in feminine sensibility brought about by the social, economic and cultural forces, whereas Anita

Desai's major concern is about exploration of the psychological condition of the oppressed hyper-sensitive women. And the character of Shashi Deshpande is struggled to overcome the shackles of conventional society.

This study is an attempt to understand women characters against the background of important aspects of woman's life – marriage, husband wife relationship, self realization and the search for the individual identity. The traditional Indian wife is the best antidote to modern ills related to family and culture. In all sections of the society whether in lower class or upper class or middle class, Indian wife is all what men can dream of. But she has lived in a society totally ruled by tradition and appropriateness in which she is no more than a second-class citizen. However, during the second part of the 20th century, one can witness a dramatic improvement in the lives of Indian women. The period leading to the new millennium coincides with a state of self awareness which causes women to break away from obsolete customs and stereo-types maintained by patriarchy. Along with household responsibilities, she now works outside the vicinity of her household, just like her male counterparts in various fields. She has also begun to fight for her rights despite the enormous pressure of patriarchy. The modernity set in by the Western culture motivated women to revolt against the existing moribund conditions and to seek their fulfillment and identity by carving their course independently.

Unfortunately, some women in search of their identity alienate themselves from the realities of human life. They fail to establish harmonious human relationships with people around. The reasons for such failures have been delineated convincingly in the writings of these writers. The prime concern of Amrita Pritam and Anita Desai has been the exploration of the inner selves of their married women protagonists who are always in search of their identity, whereas Kamala Markandaya attempts to focus on the inborn superior characteristic features of the Indian wife, who tries to keep the family ties intact. But this married woman some time feels suffocated in environment of bore spouse life as in the Despande's protagonist. The aim of the study is to trace out the problems of married Indian women as depicted in the novels of all the proposed writers and seek positive solutions to their problems.

OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH

There are the primary aims of the proposed study:-

1. A study of the present literature related to the proposed work to know the condition of the women in the society.
2. A comparative study of the basic differences in the characters of the female protagonists of mentioned novelists.
3. The role of the society in the development of the female protagonists of the present novelists.
4. Strategy adopted by these protagonists to establish themselves in the patriarchal power structure.
5. What is it that writers try to accomplish through their novels? And what is their message to the society?

In the light of above mentioned objectives the researcher aims to analyze the situation of the women in society and the basic differences in the characters of the heroines of the present novelists. The researcher would also measure the role of the societal norms; rules and regulation which are actively affect the psyche of these protagonists. The researcher would also look out the strategies used by these presented female characters to establish themselves from 'margin to center' in this patriarchal society. However, while marching on the chosen path, women should not forget that there will be many hurdles to reach the desired destination and for men it is necessary to have mutual understanding, love, respect, and dilution of the egos.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The proposed research entitled, **"A Comparative Study of the Female Protagonists in the Novels of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Markandya, Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande"**, endeavors to examine the problems encountered by the Indian women as depicted in the selected novels of Amrita Pritam, Kamla Markandya, Anita Desai and Sashi Deshpande and also analyses the ways, protagonists have adopted to overcome the problems of their lives. A comparative study of protagonists of these four novelists provides a fascinating and rewarding experience. A large number of critical articles and some full length studies with regard to these writers have appeared individually. However, except for an article or two, not many studies have attempted a comparative analysis of Indian women in the novels of these four writers. The present work studied the Indian women's status in the society and the role of the society in the development of these women characters, through the study of these female protagonists. Hence, this study seeks to examine the portrayal of Indian women by these women novelists. The thrust of the study on the comparative base is of women in particular because the protagonists are women in all of the novels chosen for study. One novel of each writer in particular, which is relevant for the study, has been taken to assert the title, **Comparative Study of Female Protagonists**, in the novels of above mention novelists. The novels which are taken up for the study are: *Pinjar (The skeleton)* by Amrita Pritam, *Nectar in a Sieve,* by Kamala Markandaya, *Cry, the Peacock,* by Anita Desai and *Roots and Shadows* by Shashi Deshpande.

The juxtaposed critical study of these four novels yields more penetrating insights into the characteristic traits of the women protagonists depicted in their novels. All the four texts represent varied voices of resistance of women in the Indian patriarchal societies. The protagonists have similar experiences to some extent, but each protagonist has adopted her own way to tackle the circumstances faced by her. It is a journey into the hitherto veiled thoughts of these women. As and when the context demands, the elements of comparison and contrast will be brought into focus in all the chapters so that the examination of the novels of these writers results in the enhancement of each others' significance.

This is a feminist study and it attempts to apply feminist critical tenets to the novels or novelists and their protagonists under consideration. However, it must be admitted that as the world presented in these novels is viewed by women, it is bound to project a women's point of view. So this is necessarily a feminist point of view. Infact, these writers are considered feminist writers to a great extent. With the study of feminism the other facts which are responsible for the development of these female characters, are also studied. In this respect socio-cultural and socio-economic studies are important.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. A complete study of the primary literature (main texts).
2. The review of the literature (secondary literature).
3. The study of socio-cultural theories (Patriarchy, Conflict and Control Theories).
4. Feminist theory and criticisms: a study and its application.
5. Psychoanalytical theory and criticisms: a study and its application.
6. Marxist theory and criticism: a study and its application (socio-economic theory).

All the above stated points will be applied as a tool to achieve the aim of proposed objectives by the researcher. These methods will be helpful to researcher to accomplish the research work and to get the desired results also. The study of the main texts of all the presented writers has been done. The brief summary of all the novels has already presented. The secondary literature related with the proposed work has also reviewed. While reviewing the history of the Indian English literature we have seen the origin of the female writers, diaspora and feminism. The researcher has aimed to apply the feminist theory and psychoanalytical theory along with the Marxism to locate the answers of proposed objectives.

The Indian society believes that the man has the power and cultural hegemony in the society and for woman it believes that 'she is never fit for freedom'. This forms Indian view of womanhood that relates Indian fabric of living. Woman since ages have been under man's subjugation and considered as 'second sex'. Women are marginalized through cultural institution and religious ritual. Feminist movements have been trying for removal of this marginalization.

Now the attitude of woman has been changed under the influence and the subjugation of masculine standards. Now she is finding out ways of her own, without yielding herself to the criticism of any 'taskmasters.' She has been living in the darkness of ignorance and negligence, but now she is moving towards light to find out her identity and to establish herself as an individual. These attempts show the tremendous changes in the psyche of Indian woman. And psychoanalysis study aims to find out the root causes of these changes. Psychoanalysis itself is a form of therapy which aims to cure mental disorders by 'investigating the interaction of conscious and unconscious elements in the mind' (as the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* puts it). "Psychoanalysis is a theory about the human mind. It came into being during the 1920. The psychoanalytic view of human behavior is relevant to our experience of literature." (Nagrajan 217) The researcher will study the characters of the proposed protagonists under the impression of this theory. On the other hand the study of Marxist theory will also help the researcher to

know the development of these characters. Many scholars are believed that economic conditions affect the individual's life. Some feminists also link the economic development of the society with the position of women in society. The ideology of male as a 'breadwinner' and female 'dependent' is the outcome of the capitalism.

SOCIAL RELEVENCE OF THE WORK

The Indian Writing in English of the twentieth century presents a consistent picture of the changing social realities of the century. Indian writers have made valuable contribution to the arena of fiction. The Indian novel in English has stood the test of time and proved its worth in fulfilling one of the primary objectives of literature, i.e. presenting reality. M.K.Naik elucidates the chief purpose of literature as follows:

"Literature encounters reality, explores reality and exposes reality." (Naik 1)

The images, based on social conditions of women drawn by the early age writers, are either idealized versions close to angels or monsters. Most of these women characters have never represented the real woman of the times. The writers were governed by the general notion that woman is innately weak, emotional, dependent, and has limited capacity to work. These women characters are one-dimensional - could be epitomes of virtue or beauty or sensuality; but they are never real women who possess many more qualities and capabilities than those portrayed by them. They have depicted women characters in a way what patriarchy demands of woman but not what woman demands of life. This stereo-typed image of a woman has been repudiated by the women writers in the country. Through their writings, they have initiated a shift in the mindset of the people. An interesting aspect of their writing has been the creative release of the "feminine sensibility". Like their Western counterparts such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Virginia Woolf and the Bronte Sisters, the Indian women novelists have established a strong tradition in Indian Writing in English.

The sense of futility, boredom and alienation of women in the society is presented lively by Anita Desai and the Sashi Deshpande through their ability to delve deep into the inner world of their characters. Anita Desai has brought out convincingly the sense of loneliness and alienation of her protagonists in her novels. The problems and conflicts faced by women in her novels are existential in nature. They occur for any woman in the society. Their self-assertion leads to self-alienation. The more the search for freedom and independence and the meaning of life, the more it results in alienation and loneliness. Thus her novels explore the inner psyche of women. It is this beautiful presentation of the inner psyche of woman that has carved out a special niche for

Desai in Indian fiction. On the other hand Deshpande shakes the roots of ancient family structure which is against the girls' education. Through her protagonist Indu, Deshpande presented the idea that the liberation of an individual's is very essential. She also freely talks on the extra marital relation on a logical ground, which the conventional society never accepts.

Kamla Markandeya's Rukmani presents the hard realities of the lower middle class society. The hunger, the starvation and the death is shown by the life of Rukmani and her family. As Markandeya is the pioneer of the diasporic writers she projects the idea of the women impowerment through Rukmani. She also presents the importance of women education. Rukmani, even though less educated, maintain the economy of her husband's home. She taught her children as well. Two of her sons got jobs in the tannery because they are educated than other employees. Amrita Pritam's Puru is the epitome of the female suppression in the society. Though her character belongs to the partition period but she represents the women of all ages. "There is no woman who has not suffered at one time or other the harassment, humiliation and violence that shadows her sex. A woman's life lies between pleasure at one end and danger at the other end. In daily life, women are routinely defined by sex, and even if not all the men are potential kidnappers, rapists, batterers, molesters and torturers of women, all women are potential victims." (Ahuja 13)

RESEARCH PLAN

Chapter—1. The Evolution of English Fiction and Emergence of Women Writers.

Chapter— 2. Socio-Economic Scenario of Post Independent India.

Chapter— 3. The Study of Amrita Pritam's *Pinjar* and Kamla Markandya's *Nectar in a Sieve.*

Chapter—4. The Study of Anita Desai's *Cry, The Peacock* and Shashi Despande's *Roots and Shadows.*

Chapter— 5. Characteristic Features of the Female Protagonists of Amrita Pritam and Kamla Markandya.

Chapter—6. Characteristic Feature of the Female Protagonists of Anita Desai and Shashi Despande.

Chapter— 7. Art of Characterization.

Chapter— 8. Conclusion.

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